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AUTHOR DeFina, Anita
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ABSTRACT

All faculty at New York's Ulster County Community College (UCCC) are evaluated on a regular basis using student, peer, and self-evaluations. Since student and peer evaluations can be capricious and self-evaluation methods at the college have no specific guidelines, it is recommended that teaching portfolios be used to provide a credible means of assessment. Teaching portfolios should include a narrative section, describing the instructor's teaching philosophy, responsibilities, and methods; course projects, assignments, and activities; motivational instructional techniques; professional development activities; methods of staying current; and goals and activities for self-improvement. The narrative should also provide evidence of teaching effectiveness, such as samples of student work, student performance indicators, representative course syllabi, new courses developed, student evaluation reports, outlines of presentations given, and achievements and awards. The main advantages of the teaching portfolio are that only annual updating is necessary and it is very reflective of changes, growth, and general improvement that take place over time. Some suggestions for maintaining a portfolio include performing regular updates, using hard evidence, and being succinct. (TGI)

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AN EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO FACULTY EVALUATION:

THE USE OF THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO

By

Anita DeFina
Chair, Math/Physical Science
Ulster Community College
StoneRidge, NY

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Paper Presented at the
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Biographical Sketch:
Anita DeFina

I have been at Ulster County Community College since 1982, teaching a variety of Math courses, but specializing in remedial and developmental areas. I also have been teaching a graduate course, "Teaching Math in the Elementary Schools," at the State University College at New Paltz for the past five years. My degrees are in Math Education, and I had done some teaching at both the junior high school and elementary levels.

In addition to my teaching duties, I have taken on a number of leadership roles. Coordinating our high school -- college 2+ 2 Program had been my responsibility for the past six years. I also served as Director of a Sex Equity Grant, and had directed the Elementary Mathematics Teacher Project over a six-year period. I became chair of the Math & Physical Sciences Department in the Fall of 1994 under a new campus-wide restructure. In 1995 I was elected to this position for a two-year period. Along with attendance at the National Chair Academy in 1994 and 95, I completed eight credits in post-graduate work through the University of Nebraska in Leadership Development.

An Effective Alternative to Faculty Evaluation: The Use of the Teaching Portfolio

Anita DeFina, Chair
Math & Physical Sciences
Ulster County Community College
Stone Ridge, N.Y. 12484

Community colleges are primarily *teaching* institutions. From my own personal experience, I can attest to the importance placed on teaching above all else by my colleagues. How effective this role of teaching is can be measured in a variety of ways. Both tenured and probationary faculty at Ulster County Community College are evaluated on a regular basis via a three-pronged approach -- i.e., student, peer, and self-evaluation. The process is taken seriously. Yet it is recognized that student evaluation of their instructors tends to be capricious at best. And peer evaluation, while somewhat effective, can set up artificial, one-shot glimpses of what is supposed to represent the "typical" instructional climate. Self-evaluation at our institution has no specific guidelines, and therefore runs the gamut from those awkward and humble, saying very little, to those who are most comfortable "tooting their own horn." Without training in this area and no formal structures to follow, one wonders what purpose this aspect truly serves.

I do believe that these three areas of faculty evaluation together can provide a credible means of assessment. It is that periodic awareness check, where the instructor can reflect on teaching philosophy, methodology, pedagogy, and currency, that can and should affect self-improvement.

One's self-assessment can be ongoing through the structure of a Teaching Portfolio. Updated each year, it becomes a record of achievements, "success stories," those items that document growth, personal and professional development over the course of one's tenure. Peter Seldin has much to say about the rationale, format, items for inclusion, along with a variety of samples and styles of Teaching Portfolios in his books, The Teaching Portfolio, (1991), and Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios, (1993). These are very informative references for those who want to get started. I have summarized below what has helped me personally in forming my own Teaching Portfolio. (Quite coincidentally, my three-year Evaluation is being conducted this semester. I have therefore followed these pointers, and can assure others of their merits.)

A Checklist for Getting Started on your Teaching Portfolio

I. The Narrative Section: (Describe each)
- Teaching Philosophy
- Teaching Responsibilities
- Teaching Methods (Give examples of strategy and implementation)
- Course Projects, Assignments, Activities
- Motivational Instructional Techniques
- Professional Development Activities
  - Workshops attended (describe impact, if any)
  - Informal research on own teaching
  - Seminars, Presentations, Publications given

- Methods of Staying Current
- Goals and Activities for Self-Improvement

II. Evidences of Teaching Effectiveness (possible sample of items to include)
- Samples of students works
- Student performance indicators
- Representative Course Syllabi
- New course development
- Self-improvement activities
- Observation reports
- Student Evaluation reports
- Outlines of Presentations given
- Achievements, Awards, etc.

A more comprehensive list, composed by the Faculty Development Criteria Committee at my institution, contains the following Performance Criteria. Faculty members have been asked to respond to each in a factual, specific and concise manner. The Division Chairs and Dean of Instruction then review these on an annual basis. I am proposing that this end of the year self-assessment be the springboard for the development of a Teaching Portfolio at Ulster County Community College for those interested faculty. The main advantage would be that only annual "updating" would be necessary. It would also be quite reflective of changes, growth, and general improvement that take place over time.

Performance Criteria

Teaching
- Evidences positive student ratings
- Evidences good peer evaluations
- Updates course content, as necessary
- Writes appropriate objectives/learning outcomes in syllabi
- Demonstrates reliable and valid evaluations methods consistent with course objectives
- Uses alternative methods of teaching
- Shows continual improvement of teaching ability
- Demonstrates literacy in information technology
- Contributes to the educational, personal, and social growth of students
- Collaborates with other faculty
- Other

Advisement
- Maintains a minimum of four office hours per week
- Demonstrates competence
- Utilizes one-on-one advisement
- Other (e.g., maintains contact with transfer institutions and possible employers for graduates)

Service
- Contributes to College (internal)
  (e.g. contributing member or chairpeson of College committees, club advisor, coordinator of special events)

- Contributes to College (external)
  (e.g. high school visitations, representative at college nights, presents at conferences)
- Other

Professional Development

- Attends professional conferences, seminars, workshops
- Reads professional journals
- Attends faculty development workshops or days on campus
- Maintains individual membership in professional organizations
- Demonstrates attendance and/or leadership in professional organizations
- Other

Once it is decided what to include in the Teaching Porfolio, hints for maintaining it can be useful. A word processor is a must . . . Update regularly . . . Consult your diary/appointment book for things that might have been overlooked . . . Use hard evidence whenever possible . . . Be succinct . . . Balance quality over quantity, weight and length . . . I have also found designating a place for collection a useful plus. As things occur that are appropriate, they can be filed in the Portfolio Folder, kept close at hand.

In closing, I want to affirm my own belief that this documentation of teaching achievements and reflections can serve a truly worthwhile purpose. The professional development and growth can be ongoing. Taking stock on a regular basis is important. And while the Teaching Portfolio may serve in personnel issues, at this point the aspect of teaching improvement has been my main focus, both in this paper and in practice.